

Wednesday, July 30, 2008

House Meets At...	Votes Predicted At...
10:00 a.m. For Legislative Business Fifteen "One Minutes" Per Side	Last Vote: 6:00 – 7:00 p.m.

Any anticipated Member absences for votes this week should be reported to the Office of the Majority Whip at 226-3210.

Floor Schedule and Procedure

- **Suspension Bills:** Today, the House will consider several bills on the Suspension calendar. Bills considered on the Suspension calendar are debatable for 40 minutes; may not be amended; and require a two-thirds vote for passage.
 1. **H.R. 6456** - To provide for extensions of certain authorities of the Department of State (Rep. Berman – Foreign Affairs)
 2. **H.Con.Res. 361** - Commemorating Irena Sendler, a woman whose bravery saved the lives of thousands during the Holocaust and remembering her legacy of courage, selflessness, and hope (Rep. Schakowsky – Foreign Affairs)
 3. **H.Res. 1266** - Congratulating Albania and Croatia on being invited to begin accession talks with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and expressing support for continuing to enlarge the alliance (Rep. Gallegly – Foreign Affairs)
 4. **H.Res. 1279** - Recognizing the Special Olympics' 40th anniversary (Rep. Terry – Foreign Affairs)
 5. **H.Res. 1370** - Calling on the Government of the People's Republic of China to immediately end abuses of the human rights of its citizens, to cease repression of Tibetan and Uighur citizens, and to end its support for the Governments of Sudan and Burma to ensure that the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games take place in an atmosphere that honors the Olympic traditions of freedom and openness (Rep. Berman – Foreign Affairs)

6. **H.Res. 1351** - Expressing support for the United Nations African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) and calling upon United Nations Member States and the international community to contribute the resources necessary to ensure the success of UNAMID (Rep. Chabot – Foreign Affairs)
7. **H.Res. 1008** - Condemning the persecution of Baha'is in Iran (Rep. Kirk – Foreign Affairs)
8. **H.R. 6604** - To amend the Commodity Exchange Act to bring greater transparency and accountability to commodity markets, and for other purposes (Rep. Peterson (MN) – Agriculture)
9. **S. 3352** - To temporarily extend the programs under the Higher Education Act of 1965. (Sen. Reid/Kennedy – Education and Labor)
10. **H.Con.Res. 296** - Expressing support for the designation of August 2008 as "National Heat Stroke Awareness Month" to raise awareness and encourage prevention of heat stroke (Rep. Boozman – Energy and Commerce)
11. **H.Res. 896** - Primary Lateral Sclerosis Awareness Month Act (Rep. Baca – Energy and Commerce)
12. **H.R. 6432** - Animal Drug User Fee Amendments of 2008 (Rep. Pallone – Energy and Commerce)
13. **H.R. 2851** - Michelle's Law (Rep. Hodes – Energy and Commerce)
14. **H.R. 1108** - Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act (Rep. Waxman – Energy and Commerce)
15. **H.R. 4040** – Conference Report on Consumer Product Safety Modernization Act (Rep. Rush – Energy and Commerce)
16. **H.R. 6633** - Employee Verification Amendment Act of 2008 (Rep. Giffords – Judiciary)
17. **H.Con.Res. 358** - Commending the members of the Nevada Army National Guard and Air National Guard for their service to the State of Nevada and the United States (Rep. Heller – Armed Services)
18. **H.Res. 415** - Honoring Edward Day Cohota, Joseph L. Pierce, and other veterans of Asian and Pacific Islander descent who fought in the United States Civil War (Rep. Honda – Armed Services)

19. **H.Res. 1248** - Recognizing the service of the USS Farenholt and her men who served our Nation with valor and bravery in the South Pacific during World War II (Rep. Ellsworth – Armed Services)
 20. **H.Res. 1316** - Honoring the service of the Navy and Coast Guard veterans who served on the Landing Ship Tank (LST) amphibious landing craft during World War II, the Korean war, the Vietnam war, Operation Desert Storm, and global operations through 2002 and recognizing the essential role played by LST amphibious craft during these conflicts (Rep. McGovern – Armed Services)
 21. **H.R. 3957** - The Water Use Efficiency and Conservation Research Act (Rep. Matheson – Science and Technology)
 22. **H.R. 2339** - The Produced Water Utilization Act of 2007 (Rep. Hall (TX) – Science and Technology)
- **H. Res. 1384 – Rule providing for consideration of H.R. 6599 – The Military construction and Veterans Affairs FY09 Appropriations Bill (Rep. Castor -Rules)**: The open rule with a preprinting requirement provides for one hour of general debate equally divided and controlled by the Chairman and Ranking Minority Member of the Committee on Appropriations. The rule makes in order only those amendments to the bill that are preprinted in the *Congressional Record* by July 30 or are pro forma amendments for the purpose of debate. The rule provides one motion to recommit the bill with or without instructions, Debate on the rule will be managed by Rep. Castor, and consideration will proceed as follows:
 - One hour of debate on the rule.
 - Possible vote on a Democratic Motion ordering the previous question. **Democrats are urged to vote yes.**
 - Vote on adoption of the rule. **Democrats are urged to vote yes.**
 - **H.R. 6599 – The Military construction and Veterans Affairs FY09 Appropriations Bill (Rep. Edwards (TX)-Appropriations)**: Pursuant to the rule, debate on the bill will be managed by Appropriations Committee Chairman Rep. David Obey, or his designee, and will proceed as follows:
 - One hour of debate on the bill.
 - Debate and votes on amendments to the bill.
 - Possible debate and vote on a Republican motion to recommit the bill.
 - Vote on final passage of the bill. **Democrats are urged to vote yes.**

Bill Summary and Key Issues

H.R. 6604 - the Commodity Market Transparency and Accountability Act

Curbing Excessive Speculation:

- **Overseeing Off-shore Trading** – Makes offshore markets trading in the U.S. follow the same rules as U.S. exchanges -- by requiring foreign boards of trade to share trading data and adopt limits on the number of futures contracts an investor can own similar to U.S.-regulated exchanges. Foreign boards of trade that offer electronic access to U.S. traders for energy or agricultural commodities to be delivered in the U.S. are not currently subjected to the same position limits traders are subject to on domestic exchanges. About 30 percent of U.S. oil futures trades fly below the regulatory radar because they are transacted on a U.S. exchange that works through a subsidiary in London.
- **Position Limits** -- Requires the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) to set position limits – the size of the stake that each speculative investor can hold in a given market -- for all agricultural and energy commodities on the designated contract markets, such as the New York Mercantile Exchange. This will limit traders' ability to amass huge positions that would otherwise allow them to distort the market.
- **Over the Counter Trading** -- Provides the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) with new authority to impose position limits on the \$9 trillion unchecked over-the-counter trading market. Over-the-counter trades — often negotiated privately by large financial entities — are less transparent than those that happen on fully regulated futures exchanges. Under the bill, the CFTC can only impose position limits if it finds disruption in over-the-counter markets for an energy or agricultural commodity. The Commission must also study the effectiveness of establishing position limits in over-the-counter markets. It also requires mandatory reporting for over-the-counter trading in agricultural and energy contracts, similar to on-exchange contracts.
- **Limit eligibility for hedge exemptions to bona-fide hedgers** – Reforms the process for granting hedge exemptions from trading limits in order to shut down a loophole that has allowed institutional investors to take, through a series of trades, larger positions, than they would be able to take if they traded on the exchanges directly.

Bringing Greater Transparency in the Market:

- Requires the CFTC to get a complete picture of the swaps markets by defining and classifying index traders and swap dealers, and subjecting them to strict reporting and recordkeeping requirements.
- The Commission will also disaggregate and publicly provide data to examine the true extent of index fund and other passive fund participation in futures markets for energy and agricultural products.

Strengthening Enforcement to Prevent Market Manipulation:

- Calls for a minimum of 100 full-time CFTC employees to strengthen enforcement, to prevent manipulation and to prosecute fraud. Despite record trading volume in the futures markets, increasing 8000 percent, CFTC staffing is at its lowest level since the agency was created in 1974.
- Establishes an independent office for the CFTC Inspector General

H.R. 1108 - Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act

This legislation would grant the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) broad authority to regulate both current and new tobacco products and restrict tobacco product marketing. The FDA would be empowered to take a broad range of actions that no federal or state agency currently can take that can significantly reduce the number of people who start to use tobacco and significantly increase the number of people who quit using tobacco, saving countless lives.

This legislation would require that the FDA's 1996 Rule, which restricted tobacco marketing and sales to youth, be republished within one month and take effect within one year of enactment of the legislation. These rules:

1. Ban all outdoor tobacco advertising within 1,000 feet of schools and playgrounds;
2. Ban all remaining tobacco brand sponsorships of sports and entertainment events;
3. Ban free giveaways of any non-tobacco items with the purchase of a tobacco product or in exchange for coupons or proof of purchase;
4. Ban free samples and the sale of cigarettes in packages that contain fewer than 20 cigarettes;
5. Limit any outdoor and all point-of-sale tobacco advertising to black-and-white text only;
6. Limit advertising in publications with significant teen readership to black-and-white text only;
7. Restrict vending machines and self-service displays to adult-only facilities;
8. Require retailers to verify age for all over-the-counter sales and provide for federal enforcement and penalties against retailers who sell to minors.

FDA's authority in these areas would not be limited to provisions of the 1996 Rule. The FDA could take additional regulatory steps to restrict tobacco marketing and to prevent tobacco sales to persons under 18. The legislation would codify the 1996 rule, which received very strong support from the tobacco

control and public health communities at the time they were originally proposed and partially implemented.

This legislation directs the Secretary of Health and Human Services may by regulation impose restrictions on the advertising and promotion of a tobacco product consistent with and to the full extent permitted by the First Amendment to the Constitution. The finding as to whether such regulation would be appropriate for the protection of the public health shall be determined with respect to the population as a whole, including users and non-users of tobacco.

The legislation requires more detailed disclosure of ingredients, nicotine and harmful smoke constituents. Tobacco companies must:

1. Disclose to the FDA what is in each existing tobacco product by brand and by quantity in each brand, including all product constituents and smoke constituents. Information must be submitted at least 90 days prior to the introduction of new brands;
 2. Inform the FDA of any changes to the product;
 3. Submit to the FDA a description of the content, delivery and form of nicotine in each product, as well as all documents that relate to health, toxicological, behavioral or physiological effects of current or future tobacco products;
 4. FDA will publish a brand-specific list of harmful and potentially harmful constituents.
- These disclosure requirements will give the FDA the information it needs to require changes to tobacco products to reduce the harm they cause and to better educate the public about the thousands of dangerous chemicals in tobacco products and health effects of tobacco use.
 - This legislation grants FDA authority to require changes in current and future tobacco products to protect public health, such as the reduction or elimination of harmful ingredients, additives and constituents, including smoke constituents. It empowers FDA to reduce nicotine yields to any level other than zero. This means FDA can reduce nicotine to minimal levels, including levels that do not lead to addiction.
 - Authorizes FDA to require the reduction or removal of harmful or potentially harmful constituents to protect the public health.
 - The legislation bans fruit or candy-flavored cigarettes. Ban the use on labels or in advertising of terms such as "light," "mild," or "low." Strictly regulate "reduced harm" products.

- Prohibits tobacco companies from making any explicit or implicit health claims, such as reduced risk of disease or reduced exposure to specific toxins, without first proving to the FDA that the scientific evidence is adequate to conclude both, (1) that the product as actually used by consumers will significantly reduce the risk of disease to individual consumers and, (2) that the product as marketed will benefit the health of the population as a whole.
- Requires the FDA to ensure that the marketing of any such products does not discourage current tobacco users from quitting or encourage new users to start. Throughout, the bill language stresses the importance of determining the effect of new products and advertising for new products on both smokers and nonsmokers (i.e. those who might be tempted to continue smoking or begin smoking by reduced harm claims). This gives important direction to courts deciding future challenges to regulatory decisions.
- Requires tobacco companies to conduct and report to FDA post-market surveillance of these products' actual usage. Hence, the bill would prohibit claims of reduced risk in the absence of sound science, but would not serve as a bar where there is both good science AND adequate protection to prevent the marketing of these claims from interfering with prevention and cessation efforts.
- The legislation requires adoption of stronger, more specific health warnings covering the top 30% of the front and rear panels of the package and bearing the word "WARNING" in 17 point type. The FDA is empowered to revise labeling requirements including text, format size and use of color graphics (i.e. Canadian-style warnings). The same warning labels are required in advertising and must comprise 20% of the area of the advertisement.
- The legislation establishes a Tobacco Products Scientific Advisory Committee. To advise the FDA on nicotine and "other safety, dependence, or health issues," an 11 member advisory committee is established consisting of 7 scientists or health professionals, 1 government official, 1 representative of the general public, 1 representative of the tobacco industry and 1 representative of tobacco growers.
- The bill would eliminate current federal law that restricts States from banning or restricting the time, place or manner of cigarette advertising under the Federal Cigarette Labeling and Advertising Act (FCLAA). It would allow states to address the location, color, size, number and placement of cigarette advertising.
- Protect states' ability to pass other tobacco control laws

- States are specifically NOT preempted from enacting other tobacco control laws and are completely free to:
 1. prohibit, restrict, or regulate the sale, distribution, and possession of tobacco products;
 2. pass smoke-free workplace laws;
 3. increase tobacco excise taxes;
 4. restrict youth access to tobacco products;
 5. restrict advertising and promotion of or use of tobacco products by individuals of any age;
 6. pass laws relating to information that is reported to the State; and
 7. pass measures relating to fire safety standards.

Conference Report to accompany H.R. 4040 – The Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act of 2008

Authorization of Appropriations – The Conferees agreed to modified language that would authorize the Commission for five years beginning in fiscal year 2010, starting at \$118 million and ending at \$136 million. The Conference Report provides a specific travel allowance for the Commission.

All-terrain Vehicle (ATV) Safety Standards – The Conferees agreed to mandate that the American National Standard for Four Wheel All-Terrain Vehicles Equipment Configuration, and Performance Requirements developed by the Specialty Vehicle Institute of America, be published in the Federal Register as a mandatory standard. The standard would make it unlawful for a manufacturer or distributor to import into or distribute in commerce in the United States a non-compliant ATV.

Phthalates Ban – The Conferees agreed to modified language that would permanently prohibit the sale of children's toys or child care articles that contain more than 0.1 percent di-(2 ethylhexyl) phthalate (DEHP), dibutyl phthalate (DBP), or benzyl butyl phthalate (BBP). The sale of children's toys or child care articles containing concentrations of more than 0.1 percent of diisononyl phthalate (DINP), diisodecyl phthalate (DIDP), or di-n-octyl phthalate (DnOP) would be prohibited on an interim basis until a review by a Chronic Hazard Advisory Panel (CHAP). After the Commission receives the report from the CHAP, the Commission, by rule, would determine whether to continue the interim prohibition.

Whistleblower Protections – The Conference Report includes whistleblower protections for employees of manufacturers, private labelers, retailers, and distributors.

Third Party Testing; Inspection of Proprietary Labs – The Conferees agreed to require third party testing of certain children’s products and provide authority to the Commission to inspect manufacturers’ proprietary laboratories.

Mandatory Toy Standards – The Conferees agreed to language that would make the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) International standard F963-07, as it exists on the date of enactment of this Conference Report (except for section 4.2 and Annex 4 or any provision that restates or incorporates an existing mandatory standard or ban promulgated by the Commission or by statute) an interim consumer product safety standard pending evaluation by the Commission. The Commission would be required to establish the mandatory standards by rule after the relevant components of the standard are evaluated. The Conference Report requires the Commission to promulgate rules to ensure the highest level of safety for toys.

Notification of Noncompliance – The Conference Report amends the notification requirements under section 15(b) of the Consumer Product Safety Act (CPSA) to promote the timely, accurate, and complete disclosure to the Commission of information that is necessary to protect public health and safety.

Prohibited Acts – The Conferees agreed to modified language that is similar to the provisions in the House bill and the Senate amendment, incorporating into the CPSA violations created by this Conference Report.

Criminal Penalties – The Conferees agreed to language that would authorize the Commission to seek asset forfeiture as a penalty for a criminal violation of acts enforced by the CPSC and would increase maximum criminal penalties and remove the knowledge of notice of noncompliance requirements for directors, officers, and agents under section 21(b) of the CPSA.

Formaldehyde Study – The Conference Report directs the Government Accountability Office to conduct a study on the use of formaldehyde in manufacturing of textile and apparel articles.

Preemption – The conferees included preemption provisions where appropriate, ensuring a uniform national standard of toy safety. The Conferees also included language intended to clarify that the requirements under the Conference Report, the CPSA, and the FHSA shall not be construed to preempt or affect State warning requirements under State laws, such as California’s Proposition 65, that were enacted prior to August 31, 2003.

Conferees also reached resolution as to whether to preempt State authority under the new federal third party testing regime created in the Conference Report, agreeing not to insert preemption for federal third party testing.

H.R. 6633 - The Employee Verification Amendment Act

H.R. 6633 reauthorizes the Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) Basic Pilot electronic employment eligibility verification program, also known as “E-Verify.” Without congressional action, E-Verify will expire in November 2008.

This legislation provides for a 5-year extension of this voluntary program for the electronic employment verification of employees. It also includes provisions that ensure DHS provides timely reimbursements to the Social Security Administration (SSA) for E-Verify's use of SSA resources. Two Government Accountability Office studies are also authorized.

Department of Homeland Security's Basic Pilot Program:

- DHS's electronic employment eligibility verification program (known as "Basic Pilot" or "E-Verify") is scheduled to expire in November 2008. This legislation reauthorizes E-Verify as a voluntary pilot program for an additional 5 years – through 2013.
- E-Verify is an internet-based system that can be used to verify the employment eligibility of newly-hired employees. It does so by checking an employee's Social Security number and citizenship status against the Social Security database and, for non-citizens, it checks work authorization status against a separate DHS database.
- In the last 2 years, over a dozen states have passed employee verification laws. Some, like Arizona have mandated E-Verify for all employers while other states require employers in certain sectors, such as government employers and contractors, to verify their employees' work authorization status.
- The federal government is also increasingly requiring E-Verify's use. On June 6, 2008, President Bush signed an amendment to Executive Order 12989 requiring that more than 200,000 federal contractors to use E-Verify. This action will likely triple the number of requests that must be processed through E-Verify.

Protection of Social Security Beneficiaries:

- E-Verify relies on the Social Security Administration's data and systems to verify the citizenship and Social Security numbers of all newly-hired individuals for their eligibility to work.
- According to the GAO, 100% of E-Verify queries are first checked against the SSA database. When there are data mismatches, workers are instructed to contact SSA and must visit an SSA field office in order to resolve the discrepancy. As E-Verify grows, so does SSA's workload.
- DHS is responsible for funding SSA's costs related to E-Verify; using the Social Security Trust Fund for E-Verify is against federal law. In prior years, DHS's reimbursements to SSA have been either delayed or not forthcoming at all.
- This legislation ensures that DHS provides timely and appropriate payments to SSA, so that E-verify does not interfere with SSA's ability to serve seniors, people with disabilities, and survivors.

Government Accountability Office (GAO) Studies:

- **A study of the Basic Pilot Confirmation System:** The GAO will report to Congress on the causes of erroneous tentative nonconfirmations, how they are remedied and the effect they have on individuals, employers and federal agencies.

- **A study of the Effects of Basic Pilot on Small Entities:** The GAO will examine the experiences of small entities (small businesses, non-profits and municipalities) with using Basic Pilot by investigating direct and indirect impacts on basic pilot participants. It will also provide specific data on businesses with fewer than 50 employees as well as on small entities operating in states that have mandated use of the basic pilot program.

H.R. 6599 - The Military construction and Veterans Affairs FY09 Appropriations Bill

The Military Construction and Veterans Affairs bill sends a clear message to America's service members and women, their families, and our veterans that we all appreciate and respect their service and sacrifice.

It builds upon the efforts of the last two years, as this Congress has made veterans its #1 priority. In 2007, Congress passed three separate appropriations bills that increased total funding for Veterans medical care by \$11.8 billion, so that they may receive the quality of care that they deserve. The emergency supplemental passed by the House last week continues those efforts with further increases for VA medical care and rewarding those who serve by expanding the GI bill to provide a full, four-year college benefit to veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars.

This year's bill builds on those accomplishments. It starts by rejecting the President's proposal to cut the Department of Veterans Affairs construction by \$788 million, so that the Department has the resources it needs to address buildings that have fallen into disrepair.

It goes on to address the critical needs facing veterans medical care as soldiers return from Iraq and Afghanistan, building on the historic increases provided last year by:

- Increasing enrollment of Priority 8 veterans by 10 percent, ensuring that we keep our commitment to all veterans
- Providing veterans with advanced prosthetics
- Making substantial increases to mental health and substance abuse

For active duty service members and their families, the bill provides \$336 million above the President's request for quality of life projects that will directly improve living conditions and health care delivery.

The subcommittee took its oversight responsibility seriously, holding 19 hearings and one briefing to examine the President's request.

Bill Total

2008 Enacted:	\$63.9 billion
President's Request:	\$69.3 billion
Committee Mark:	\$72.7 billion

MILITARY CONSTRUCTION: \$24.8 billion, \$400 million above the President's request and \$4.2 billion above 2008. The large increase is mostly due to the costs of implementing Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) and plans to increase the size of the Army and Marine Corps.

Quality of Life Initiative: \$336 million, not requested by the President, to continue a quality of life initiative for troops and their families started in the 2008 supplemental including: nearly \$200 million for five new trainee and recruit housing facilities for the Army and Marine Corps to improve the barracks soldiers and marines live in when they train; and \$136 million for medical military construction and planning activities to upgrade substandard medical treatment facilities. For years, service members and their families have said that quality of life issues are their top priority, but they have been neglected by this Administration.

2005 Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) and Re-stationing: \$9.1 billion, \$1.8 billion above 2008 and the same as the President's request, to implement base closures and realignments, and support the re-stationing of 70,000 troops and their families from overseas to the United States. The bill also funds planning for the eventual relocation of 8,000 marines and 9,000 dependents from Okinawa to Guam.

Growing the Force: \$5.6 billion in military construction and family housing, to support the Administration's program to increase the size of the Army by 65,000, the Marine Corps by 27,000, and the Guard and Reserve by 9,200 personnel.

1990 BRAC: \$473 million, \$178 million above 2008 and \$80 million above the President's request, to address an estimated \$3.5 billion backlog in needed environmental cleanup for bases that were closed during the four previous BRAC rounds as identified in most recent Defense Environmental Programs Annual Report.

Military Housing: \$3.2 billion, \$300 million above 2008, to further eliminate inadequate military housing.

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS: \$47.7 billion, \$4.6 billion above 2008 and \$2.9 billion over the President's request, for veterans' medical care, claims processors, and facility improvements.

Veterans Health Administration: \$40.8 billion, \$1.6 billion over the President's request and \$3.9 billion above 2008, for veterans' medical care. The Veterans Health Administration estimates they will treat more than 5.8 million patients in 2009 including more than 333,275 veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan (40,000 more than 2008).

- **Medical Services:** \$30.9 billion, \$1 billion above the President's request and \$2.8 billion above 2008, to improve access to medical services for all veterans.
 - **Increase Enrollment of Priority 8 Veterans:** \$400 million, not requested by the President, to start enrolling 10 percent of Priority 8 veterans. An estimated one-half of all uninsured veterans are

Priority 8. Priority 8 veterans have not been enrolled since 2003 as part of an Administration effort to cut costs.

- **Mental Health and Substance Abuse:** \$3.8 billion for specialty mental health care and \$584 million for substance abuse programs.
- **Fee-Based Care:** \$200 million, not requested by the President and not funded in 2008, for fee-based services to improve access to care where VHA services are not available.
- **Beneficiary Travel:** \$100 million above the President's request to increase the beneficiary travel reimbursement rate from 28.5 cents per mile to 41.5 cents per mile.
- **Assistance for Homeless Vets:** \$130 million for the homeless grants and per diem program, rejecting the President's \$8 million cut and the same as 2008, including \$32 million to hire additional personnel for the HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing Program.
- **New Generation Prosthetics:** \$1.6 billion, \$250 million above 2008 and \$116 million above the President's request, to provide veterans with appropriate prosthetic support given recent advances in technology.
- **Medical Support and Compliance:** \$4.4 billion, \$144 million above the President's request and \$338 million above 2008, to ensure the efficient operation of the Department's health care system and to support plans to increase enrollment of Priority 8 veterans by 10 percent.
- **Medical Facilities:** \$5 billion, \$368 million above the President's request and \$769 million above 2008, including a \$300 million increase for on-going maintenance and renovations of existing facilities to address identified shortfalls and to ensure the Department's facilities remain capable of delivering world-class medicine. The Department currently estimates a maintenance backlog of over \$5 billion. Includes \$68 million to support plans to increase enrollment of Priority 8 veterans by 10 percent.
- **Medical and Prosthetic Research:** \$500 million, rejecting the President's \$38 million cut and \$20 million above 2008, for research to help improve the quality of life for injured and aging veterans. Restores the cuts to trauma and mental health research – important to veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Major and Minor Construction: \$1.9 billion, rejecting the President's \$788 million cut and \$215 million above 2008, to fulfill the Department's commitment to fund recommendations made by the Capitol Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES), which was established to look at facilities and determine their construction needs. The increase in minor construction will enable the Department to complete 145 projects in fiscal year 2009.

Extended Care Facilities: \$165 million, rejecting the President's \$80 million cut and the same as 2008, for grants to States for construction and renovation of extended care facilities. The funding level will meet identified life/safety needs and still provide funding for construction of additional new facilities.

General Operating Expenses: \$1.8 billion, \$102 million above the President's request and \$197 million above 2008, to enable the Department to hire roughly 2,100 additional claims processors to work down the backlog of benefits claims and to reduce the time to process new claims. The most recent VA quarterly status report estimates that nearly 396,000 claims are pending which are 20,000 more than their goal.

Information Technology: \$2.5 billion, \$232 million above 2008 and \$50 million above the President's request, for an emergency fund to address critical unplanned needs at medical facilities.

Inspector General: \$87.8 million, rejecting the President's \$4 million cut and \$7.3 million above 2008, to provide additional personnel for oversight activities, including inspections of community based outpatient clinics and VA Centers.

RELATED AGENCIES

American Battle Monuments Commission: \$55.5 million, \$11 million above 2008 and \$8 million above the President's request. This funding provides for the care and operation of our military monuments and cemeteries around the world.

United States Court of Appeals for Veterans Claims: \$73.98 million, \$51 million above 2008 and \$50 million above the President's request, for the acquisition of a new facility for the Court.

Cemeterial Expenses: \$31.2 million, matching 2008 and the President's request, for Arlington cemetery.

Armed Forces Retirement Home: \$63 million from the Trust Fund, the same as the President's request, for operation and maintenance of the Armed Forces Retirement Home, including \$8 million for capital expenditures at the DC campus.

Quote of the Day

"The willingness with which our young people are likely to serve in any war, no matter how justified, shall be directly proportional as to how they perceive the Veterans of earlier wars were treated and appreciated by their country."

- George Washington